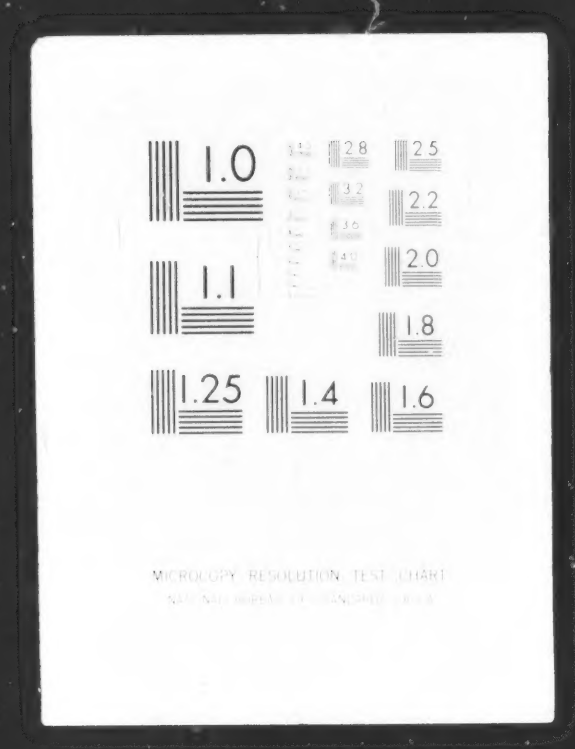
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ABSTRACT

Library legislation affects all types of libraries, including special libraries. A good example is found in the New York state legislation for Reference and Research Library Resources Systems, in which public, business, industrial, hospital, college, university and historical society libraries are organized into nine regional councils. The 1974 New York legislative program provided for union lists of serials and newspapers, a bibliographic data center, statewide delivery systems, materials preservation, access to materials by scholars, workshops, continuing education programs, collection development, and reference services. The Special Libraries Association should form a legislative committee to work with other library legislative committees at the national level to influence legislation on services, funding, intellectual freedom and obscenity issues, and copyright. In addition, special librarians should form legislative committees at state and local levels, or join with existing committees. The special librarian may also influence legislation by writing to elected officials. (LS)

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LIBRARY LEGISLATION IS FOR SPECIAL LIBRARIANS TOO

by

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and
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Although I am a special librarian, I believe in the totality of librarianship; and here are some reasons why I think that all of you should be vitally concerned with at least one phase of this totality, namely, legislation.

As prices of materials and manpower mount, no librarian can buy everything that is wanted; and space costs, even with microforms, make it imperative that outside resources be called into use. There are many times, I am sure, when you need to consult material that you do not have in your library. Where do you turn? To the public library? Do you realize the great wealth of material that is waiting for you in a place which you may have thought of as one for popular reading only? Do you think of the public library as a center for children and young adults with a few hobby-type books around, some film strips, records and assorted audio-visual equipment? Do not be misled by the desire of some libraries to give a very "with it" appearance, for buried underneath these "now" trappings are items of great value to the special librarian. If your public library does not have what you want, very often the helpful people there will try to get it for you through interlibrary loan. If, however, you are located at some distance from a public library, you may want to write for information from one of the large resource centers such as the Research Libraries of the New York Public Library, or in the case of engineering, perhaps to the Engineering Societies Library.

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But money for public libraries to cope with interlibrary loans and money to keep such resource centers as the New York Public Library in operation does not grow on trees. It must be legislated.

Very often I believe, special librarians do not realize what a vital force they can be. They are too willing to sit back and let the rest of the library world carry on. Edythe Moore, our new President, in seeking to establish priorities for the future has expressed great interest in networks. This subject, I have been told, is scheduled to be the theme for the Chicago conference. But if networks are going to function, they must be funded; and appropriate legislation is going to come about only if we work for it.

Legislative effort for effective exchange of information has to be conducted at all levels - local, state and/or regional and federal. The American Library Association in its Federal Legislative Policy says "The wide dispersion of population, rising levels of education and expanding volume of information make increasingly difficult the rapid delivery of information to the citizen who needs it. The concept of the local library as possessor and purveyor of <u>all</u> needed information is obsolete. A national library network is needed through which all types of libraries, scattered across the nation, can cooperate in sharing resources."[1] I believe in this concept, and I note that it says "all types of libraries." Obviously special librarians should play a great part in the formation and functioning of such a network. I would, therefore, urge the Special Libraries Association to organize and operate a legislative committee that will coordinate its work with that of ALA and in conjunction with the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science.

In New York State all library-related legislative work heretofore has been performed by the New York Library Association which is the only library-oriented organization in New York State that has an active legislative program. One example of the effectiveness of its state legislative effort is the organization of the Reference and Research Library Resources Systems in New York State. In this program, known as the 3 R's, the state has been divided into nine regions called councils. They are all called councils, that is with the exception of the Metropolitan New York area. This one's official title is The New York Metropolitan Reference and Research Library Agency, Inc., but it is known as METRO. These nine 3 R's systems include in their membership all types of libraries - public, business, industrial, hospitals and historical societies, as well as colleges and universities. Among the projects listed in the 1974 3 R's Legislative Program as proposed by the College and Universities Section of the New York Library Association, are the following on a statewide basis:

1. Union list of newspapers and a program for filming them.
2. Bibliographic data center.
3. Continuance of the New York State Union List of Serials.
4. Statewide delivery systems.
5. Conservation and preservation of library materials including repair and centralized storage as well as filming projects.
6. A library research and experimentation component for the State Education Department, under whose aegis library development falls in New York State.
7. A statewide program of access (including borrowing privileges)

for qualified scholars, with provision for reimbursement to participating libraries on a reasonable cost recovery basis.

On a regional basis the program called for the implementation of more workshops, continuing education programs, delivery systems, collection development, and bibliographic and reference services.

One of the most effective programs of the 3 R's systems is the New York State Interlibrary Loan Network, or NYSILL. This network, established in 1967, is in the process of continual development. Its "raison d'être is to provide New York State's research community a means of access to advanced-level library materials."[2] In order to accomplish its goal a hierarchical arrangement has evolved with requests from the public libraries filtering through to the public library system headquarters or the 3 R's bibliographic centers, thence to the NYSILL clearing house at the State Library, and then if necessary by Telex to the 12 research libraries that serve as specialized resource centers for the service. The Engineering Societies Library is the resource back-up for material in engineering and technology. This actually means that even though you may not be a member of one of our societies and heretofore could not get material on loan from ESL, now if you live or work in New York State you may through the NYSILL program be allowed to borrow books from us, or, from the other participating specialized collections. This boon is the result of legislation, without which there would be no money for such services.

On the local level, in New York City, we have the previously-mentioned METRO with a whole host of on-going activities, including workshops, seminars,

a collection development program and others. These, of course, are available because of state fiscal legislation. All of you will remember, I'm sure, the sad plight of the New York Public Library two years ago when many, many services had to be curtailed sharply for lack of funds. In this case city legislation was involved, and a great many of the local citizenry responded with letters to the Mayor and to the City Council. These letters worked.

So far I have been emphasizing the resources aspect of the legislative effort. There are, however, many other facets of librarianship that are affected by legislative action. For example, intellectual freedom and the whole question of the obscenity laws should be an important part of a legislative program. As John Spaulding said in his speech at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Publishers in Bermuda this spring, "Whenever and wherever it takes place, censorship diminishes us all,"[3] and even special librarians can be affected by it.

The problem of library service to the institutionalized, both correctional and mental, can be solved only by legislation. It is true that there are a few good volunteer programs in these fields, but the vast majority of inmates all over the country are most inadequately served. Likewise making information available to the handicapped, whether bed-ridden or ambulatory, demands funding by the legislative body of the state or province. The aging, too, need to be taken into consideration; and as special librarians we should all be cognizant of our responsibilities in this area. The social awareness of our profession must be developed.

One problem that must be settled by federal legislative action has not yet been mentioned. That is the question of copyright. Obviously this is a very sticky proposition that Congress has been unable to solve in the last 40 years, but with the new communications and reproduction techniques a new federal law is an absolute necessity. Feedback from special librarians should be part of this law when it is written, and the time to start lobbying is now.

Never underestimate the power of lobbying. In an Associated Press dispatch from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania the following story points out how efficacious it can be. "A months-long lobbying effort by an Upper Darby third grade class has paid off with the State Senate passage of a bill to make the firefly, or lightning bug, the state's official insect. The idea started with the Highland Park Elementary School third grade class, Senator Clyde Dengler said."[4]

In closing there are three proposals that I would like to make. One has already been mentioned, that is a legislative committee on the Association level, but I would add that I believe chapter legislative committees should be formed too. Secondly, if you have a local or state library organization with a legislative action group, join that organization and add your weight to it. Thirdly, support proposed legislation, or help to initiate new bills, by writing letters to the appropriate elected officials. Repeatedly legislators say that mail is read and that letters are very important factors in their decision-making process. I also know that the staff members working for these legislators can be extremely valuable allies when it comes

to influencing legislation. Do not overlook the aide who may be instrumental in drafting the bill you want to see passed. The title of an article by G. J. Goodwin in the Wisconsin Library Bulletin sums up my feelings nicely "Let Your Legislator Know: study the issues and bills and then communicate." [5]

We cannot live in a vacuum but must unite with others in the world of information. Only if special librarians are willing to pitch in and work for adequate funding for all libraries, can they realize their full potential both as professionals and as human beings.

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